

ASSEMBLY BILL 1532

CAL GRANT: FOSTER YOUTH

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ISSUE

- Although California has state financial assistance programs available to all eligible students (including foster youth) specific barriers prevent some foster youth from attaining these funds.
- The programs have a strict deadline for filing the student aid application that provides a very limited window of opportunity for application.
- The programs also require students to submit information from high schools under strict deadlines.
- Foster youth are fully eligible for these programs and are encouraged to apply. However, foster youth may be less aware of deadlines and face other barriers or circumstances that may limit or affect their ability to apply for assistance or enter postsecondary education in the manner required by these programs.

EXISTING LAW

REQUIRES:

- The student to submit a complete financial aid application, no later than March 2 in spring before going to college in the fall. Students must wait a full year to try again if they miss this deadline.
- Students to attain a high school grade point average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale (middle-income students) or at least a 2.0 (for lower income students).
- The student to pursue an undergraduate academic program of not less than one academic year that is offered by a qualifying institution.

- The student to receive a high school diploma or its equivalent. The student to demonstrate financial need and meet all federal student aid requirements.

THIS BILL

Adds Article 8 to Chapter 1.7 of Part 42 of the Education Code:

- Waives the March 2nd deadline for foster youth. This enables foster youth to apply year round and requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to consider these students on a monthly cycle.
- Requires CSAC to work with the Department of Social Services (as they do for Chafee Grant) to confirm that the student is or was a foster youth. This builds upon an existing administrative function and saves money for the state.
- Allows additional time for the GPA verification to be submitted. Currently this is an obstacle for even the most well informed students. UC Berkeley alone states that over 100 students in 2005-06 appeared eligible for Cal Grant but did not have a GPA submitted on time. This provision will mean foster youth have a reasonable chance to meet the requirement, even when high school counselors are swamped with college admissions work.
- Extends current age restrictions on the application for a Entitlement Cal Grant (that now range from just out of high school to 24 years of age) to 30 years of age. Reports and studies indicate many foster youth require additional time to understand

higher education and take advantage of its opportunities.

SUMMARY

- This bill would provide California's current and former foster youth with expanded access to the Cal Grant entitlement programs (for which they already qualify) by waiving deadline, giving them help with GPA processing, and raising the age limits. No financial or academic criteria are being changed. Essentially, as long as the current or former foster youth is under the age of 30, the student can apply at any time and receive benefits, if eligible. This will be a major improvement in California's support for these students who face so many barriers.

SUPPORT

- ☐ California Youth Connection
- ☐ Applied Research Center
- ☐ American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO (AFSCME)

OPPOSITION

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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